

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me and all my colleagues in thanking Betty Brady for her years of service to the Powder Springs, Georgia community.

LEAK OF SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, the leak of the sensitive personal information of millions of veterans and active duty military personnel by the Department of Veterans Affairs is a disgrace.

The information, including Social Security numbers, dates of birth and disability was taken from the VA to an employee's home via his laptop. When the laptop was stolen from his residence, the private, sensitive information of more than 26 million veterans and active duty troops were stolen with it, making them all potential targets for identity theft.

No employee of the Federal Government should have the ability to walk out of their office with that amount of personnel data on their computer. The administration needs to make sure that something like this never happens again.

The VA must also work with Congress to provide assistance to the millions of victims of this leak without affecting veterans' benefits. Veterans should have the resources made available to them free of charge to monitor their credit reports for suspicious action.

If any of our veterans or troops become victims of identity theft because of the security breach, they should not be held responsible. After all, it was by no act of their own that their personal information was compromised.

Last night, I introduced H.R. 5588, a bill that would ensure the veterans are protected in case of their stolen identity.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES GAINING GROUND IN IRAQ

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as the House prepares to consider a resolution for victory in the global war on terrorism, I would like to congratulate U.S. troops and coalition forces for training Iraqi security forces.

In 3 years, coalition troops have transformed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi volunteers into battle-tested Iraqi security forces. The Defense Department's quarterly report recently stated that there are more than 263,400 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces. Additionally, the Iraqi Army

now controls 30,000 square miles of territory, an area roughly the size of my home State of South Carolina. Nearly two-thirds of combat operations are now conducted by Iraqis alone or jointly with coalition forces.

Day by day, Iraqis are defeating terrorists and gaining control over their country. Progress in Iraq is helping to ensure security in America, and we must remain committed to completing this critical mission protecting American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

REPUBLICAN RAID ON STUDENT AID INCREASES LOAN COSTS

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, with tuition costs rising and the availability of financial aid declining, many parents in our country are finding it harder and harder to afford the cost of college education for their sons and daughters. However, these families know the importance of having a college degree in today's economy. We really cannot underestimate the importance.

Therefore, large numbers are relying on student loans to help meet tuition costs. While these loans can be a great resource to make college accessible to more students, they can also cause great financial hardships for the borrower when they graduate and the payments are due.

The administration has supported making paying for these loans even more difficult by enacting their raid on student aid and cutting \$12 billion from the higher education budget. Because of these drastic and devastating cuts, interest rates on student and parent loans for college will increase significantly July 1.

To avoid this dramatic increase in interest rates, I encourage all Federal student loan borrowers to visit www.loanconsolidation.ed.gov to consolidate their loans before July 1.

KATRINA BILLS

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, this week several of my colleagues and I are circulating a chart listing 176 Katrina bills, out of which only a dozen have become law to date. As we sit here today, dozens of survivors are protesting the injustices suffered at the hands of FEMA. Hurricane season is upon us again, and FEMA continues to deny housing assistance to tens of thousands of needy families, many of them now rendered homeless.

New Orleans remains a toxic disaster zone that still looks much like it did the day after the hurricane. Despite the tens of billions of dollars spent on no-bid, sweetheart contracts, much of it wasted.

Will the 163 Katrina bills sitting in committee also go to waste? Or will Congress address the ongoing specific needs of the survivors by moving existing legislation and checking fraud and abuse by providing real oversight of appropriations?

The choice is ours.

□ 1230

HOUSE REPUBLICANS TURN BACKS ON MIDDLE CLASS; ECONOMIC INSECURITY GROWS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans have turned their backs on the middle class, and that is one of the main reasons an overwhelming majority of Americans want Congress to move in a new direction. Our constituents want us to work on behalf of all Americans, not just the wealthy few. But for 5 years now the Bush White House and Congressional Republicans have showered millionaires with large tax breaks while ignoring the economic conditions of the middle class. This year, while middle-class families received an average of a \$60 tax break, America's millionaires received a whopping \$65,000 gift from the Federal Government. And Washington Republicans call this fair?

It would be one thing if both the wealthy and middle class were both benefiting in today's economy, but again many of our constituents are facing uncertain times. Today, wages are stagnant, family debt is on the rise, health care benefits have either disappeared or increased dramatically, and savings levels have plummeted.

These are the economic conditions many of our constituents face today, but this House Republican majority seems content with the status quo; and it is time this House listened to hard-working middle-class Americans.

WAIVING REQUIREMENT OF CLAUSE 6(a) OF RULE XIII WITH RESPECT TO CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 862, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 862

Resolved, That the requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII for a two-thirds vote to consider a report from the Committee on Rules on the same day it is presented to the House is waived with respect to any resolution reported on the legislative day of June 13, 2006, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5576) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.